

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 TRSE-00 FAA-00 DOTE-00 AID-05

IGA-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 SS-15 SP-02

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6030

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ROME FOR RCAA DWOR

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAIR LE

SUBJ: ASAD NASR WINS MEA CHAIRMANSHIP

1. ON DECEMBER 2, BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF MIDDLE EAST AIRLINES ELECTED ASAD NASR AS CHAIRMAN TO REPLACE SHEIKH NAJIB ALAMUDDIN, WHO RETIRED SEPTEMBER 28. NASR, A GREEK ORTHODOX BORN IN PALESTINE, STEPS UP FROM POSITION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN/GENERAL MANAGER. HE WAS WIDELY REGARDED AS MOST COMPETENT OF SEVERAL CANDIDATES ALTHOUGH HIS PALESTINIAN ORIGIN, DESPITE 23 YEARS AS A NATURALIZED LEBANESE CITIZEN, WEIGHED AGAINST HIM IN SOME QUARTERS. IN HIS FAVOR WERE HIS SUPERB MATHEMATICAL/ FINANCIAL TALENTS AND EVIDENCE OF THEIR APPLICATION IN MEA'S REMARKABLE COMEBACK FROM WAR DEFICITS TO CURRENT PROFITABILITY. HE KNOWS THE AIRLINE BUSINESS. ASAD NASR'S WIN REPRESENTS PRAGMATIST VICTORY AND ASSURES THAT MEA'S ALREADY EXCELLENT MANAGEMENT WILL REMAIN EXCELLENT.

2. COMMERCIALLY, NASR REPRESENTS GOOD NEWS FOR U.S.

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INTERESTS. MEA BASES AIRCRAFT PURCHASE DECISIONS ON A COMPUTERIZED MATHEMATICAL MODEL DEVELOPED BY HIM. WHILE THIS DOES NOT EXCLUDE POLITICAL PRESSURES, FACT IS THAT MEA FLIES BOEINGS EXCLUSIVELY AND IS MORE LIKELY TO MAKE RATIONAL RATHER THAN POLITICAL DECISIONS WHILE NASR IS IN CHARGE. BETWEEN NOW AND 1985, MEA PLANS TO ACQUIRE 14-18 AIRCRAFT IN 200-SEAT CATEGORY. U.S. MANUFACTURERS

CAN EXPECT A STRONG CHALLENGE FROM A-300 AIRBUS, BUT AS LONG AS ASAD NASR IS IN CHARGE OF MEA, US AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURERS SHOULD HAVE A FAIR SHOT AT THIS LUCRATIVE MARKET.

3. COMMENT: SOME LEBANESE POLITICIANS HAVE HINTED DARKLY THAT NASR'S SELECTION WILL LEAD TO A PALESTINIAN TAKEOVER OF MEA. THE LOCAL PRESS, IN REPORTING NASR'S ELECTION, HAS TENDED TO IGNORE HIS PALESTINIAN ORIGIN.
PARKER

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Message Attributes

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